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L.A. BEAT

LAST ROAR FOR SLASH MAGAZINE

BY TERRY ATKINSON

In three years of chronicling the local punk-rock scene, Slash magazine fluctuated wildly between the crudely outrageous and the brilliantly iconoclastic. Depite lingering financial problems, the magazine's meager staff managed to put out a 35-to-40-page issue each month through last June. It offered lively, detailed coverage that was as flamboyant and provocative as the scene itself.

Slash is where you read first about bands like X and the Motels, which have gone on to national attention. It's also where you read about dozens of lesser-known but interesting groups that comprised a renaissance that continues today. But since June, only one issue of Slash has appeared—a 104-page "World Update." It turned out to be Slash's last roar. The magazine is *finis*.

Ironically, we may be hearing more about Slash than ever in the coming months.

The magazine may be gone, but the record company it spawned is very much alive. Encouraged by strong sales of its second album release, the debut LP by Los Angeles' current top band X, owner Bob Biggs is bullish on his label: "We're doing well, but we expect to eventually do *very* well. There are six people working here full time now. Some people don't think that's so great, until I tell them that a year ago there was only one—me," he laughs.

"We're very close to signing the Plugz for an LP that'll probably be out in March or April, and the second X album should be released about then, too. Our goal is to have five progressive, exciting bands on the label by the end of '81—maybe even by the end of summer. Then we'll concentrate on them in '82. The potential is enormous."

The label's success is fine and dandy, but oddly enough it contributed to the death of the magazine. Biggs admits part of the publication's problem was that employees, like associate editor Chris Des Jardins, had to give more and more time to record company duties, leaving the magazine unmanned.

Other reasons were even more damaging. Slash was chiefly edited and largely written by French emigre Claude Bessy, a.k.a. Kickboy Face. but when his girlfriend moved back to her native England last summer Bessy followed her after finishing work on the "Update" issue.

"Claude's leaving really hurt," said Biggs. "He was a maniac about the new bands he liked, and he brought so much energy to Slash."

What hurt most, though, was the realization that Slash couldn't generate enough advertising as a quarterly. "We could have put out an issue, but it would have been a losing proposition," Biggs says. "Right now with the record company, we're trying to put what money we make directly back into promoting the records, and the magazine would have sapped those funds."

The magazine will be missed. X's singer-writer Exene thinks Slash's chief value was in getting local bands known outside of Los Angeles. "Even before our album came out, we received letters from people from all over. They'd either read about us in Slash, or else someone had read Slash and then wrote about us in their own paper."

Another tribute to the magazine appears (of all places) in the new revised edition of the Whole Earth Catalog. "Slash is an irreverent and snotty monthly tabloid from L.A.," the book states in a strong recommendation, "which somehow manages to convey an honesty and intelligence that is certainly absent in 99% of the slick media."

Maybe Jimbo, the hulking cartoon punk who was Slash's symbol, was right when he angrily proclaimed from one of the tabloid's covers: "The world doesn't deserve this good of a magazine."

□

AROUND TOWN: The Roxy is spicing up its mainly mainstream policy with some Whisky-Starwood-like bills. This weekend saw Suburban Lawns, Jon & the Nightriders and the Falcons playing with the chairs and tables on the floor level taken out—something the Whisky started doing months ago. . . . That policy continues next week when the Go-Gos and the Ventures appear. "We began doing that," said a Roxy spokesperson, "for the Dickies' late show in November. During the first set, the kids were trying to stand up and were knocking chairs over each other. Mario (Maglieri, the club's manager) took out the tables for the next show, and the kids thought it was great."

The Go-Gos have stopped pretending that Kathy Valentine is only a temporary replacement as bass player. She's in for good, and original member Margot is out. . . . There'll be a live Jon & the Nightriders LP on Bomp late next month; the instrumental surf band recorded it a couple of weeks ago at the Whisky. Also on the Bomp schedule: ex-Dead Boys singer Stiv Bators' first solo LP, a live album by his old band before they broke up, and a 30-song Bomp sampler called "Experiments in Destiny."

Ugh-Ahh-Ooo is the name some veterans of the local scene have chosen to appear under on Thursday at the Whisky. Probably playing for this one occasion only, the group will include the Screamers' Paul Roessler and K.K. (maybe they'll let us know what is happened to that long-submerged band), Leroy Jones of the defunct Leroy & the Lifters, and the Weirdos' Nicky Beat.□

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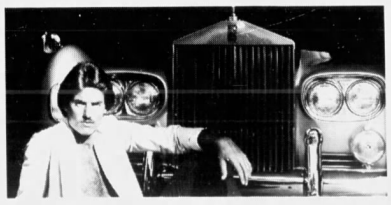

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